TAMPA — They ran to the sidelines and celebrated with their fans. Some took bows, others ripped off their jerseys and all of them posed for pictures. For the University School boys soccer program, this was a moment to savor.

After 100 scoreless minutes and a tie through eight sets of penalty kicks, Suns goalkeeper Joseph Ghitis came out of the net and lined up to take a shot. He converted and moments later, Lake Highland Prep’s Torin Thielhelm shot over the crossbar, giving University School a 1-0 (9-8 PK) victory in the Class 3A state championship match at Pepin Stadium.

"At first, I was really nervous but I thought in my head that I had to step up for my team," Ghitis said. "Me and my team, we just love the school. We love each other and we go hard every time. It was something unexplainable. It was the greatest feeling."

The win gave the Suns (21-4-2) the first title in program history and helped erase the memories of a 2010 season that ended short of the state tournament.

And Ghitis, the sophomore keeper, proved to be the hero, recording not only the winning goal in penalty kicks but making saves on both of Lake Highland Prep’s limited opportunities.

"I made him take it," Suns coach Salomon Kidane said. "I've known him for a while and I knew he was a great striker. I wasn't surprised. I think this [victory] means a great deal. University School is known for its academics, but our headmaster has done a great job of balancing academics and athletics."

Once in penalty kicks, all nine of the Suns shooters converted.

It proved a fitting effort for a team that played hard throughout regulation, outshooting Lake Highland 5-2 through the two overtimes.